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ABSTRACT

Current research on women leaders has concentrated on four themes, all of which have been treated in terms of male-oriented leadership theory. Some studies have concentrated on social and psychological differences between men and women leaders, while a second group notes workplace attitudes toward stereotyped male and female traits. Both of these types of studies have lacked measures of leadership effectiveness. However, a third group, considering the inequities facing women leaders, has broken through male-oriented leadership studies. But the most productive studies of women leaders have identified general leader behaviors and skills and have shown no significant differences between effective male and female leadership. Using specific behaviors found to be common among effective leaders of either sex, a new study examines school union leaders, male and female, to determine the skills they rated highest in their jobs, their motives and incentives, and their reasons for choosing union rather than school administration. Men and women, it was found, agreed on essential skills in leadership and on most incentives; however, a majority of women, unlike male counterparts, found union leadership attractive because they could remain in teaching. (JW)

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IN QUEST OF A GENDER-INCLUSIVE THEORY OF LEADERSHIP: CONTRIBUTIONS FROM RESEARCH ON WOMEN LEADERS IN SCHOOL UNIONS

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IN QUEST OF A GENDER-INCLUSIVE THEORY OF LEADERSHIP: CONTRIBUTIONS FROM RESEARCH ON WOMEN LEADERS IN SCHOOL UNIONS

Theoretical Perspective

Assuming that leadership theory is formed by and impacts on the culture in which it exists, then it is not surprising that traditional leadership theory was proposed for, researched on and normed on male leaders in male-oriented organizations. In an earlier conceptual analysis of the development of leadership thought, I determined that leadership theory was not gender-inclusive.[1] That is, research that has been informed by that traditional theory does not allow for a wide range of behaviors that includes attention to behaviors that are culturally defined as appropriate for, or attributed to both men and women. Therefore, they are inadequate explanations of the requirements for effective organizational leadership. Moreover, this exclusively male orientation has contributed to the inability of the research community to delineate an expanded set of behaviors that would be responsive to the special needs of contemporary human service organizations.

Current Research on Women Leaders

In response to these articulated needs, a significant number of studies of women leaders have been conducted in the recent past. The focus and design of this research is intended to respond to the problems of male exclusivity inherent in the traditional research base. I will briefly review the themes that have emerged from this current research activity: (1) General Characteristics of Males and Females; (2) Issues Related to Attitudes; (3) Issues Related To Organization Role and Equity; and (4) Gender Differences In Leader Behaviors.

General Male/Female Characteristics

Many studies have concentrated on identifying behavioral, psychological and social differences that apply generally to men and women. These characteristics are then used to draw implications for persons who occupy leader positions.

For example, differences in sex role expectations have been found to influence leadership aspirations.[2] Similarly, sex role appropriate behavior and sex role identity cause differences in the way men and women define their leadership styles.[3] The effects of sex and androgeny on the emergence of leadership have also been demonstrated.[4] An interesting psychological variable that is receiving much attention now is moral reasoning: Gilligan and Bussey & Maughn have suggested that women's moral reasoning is more context-oriented, and that they do not make less developed moral choices than men.[5] Finally, general differences in the ways that men and women exercise power and use authority have been identified.[6]

The utility of social-psychological differences between men and women in defining differences between male and female leader behavior has not yet been demonstrated. In addition, these characteristics will probably be adapted when individuals interact in organizational contexts. Finally, studies that are designed to delineate differences between males and females are incomplete. That is, they do not provide us with data that allow us to identify dimensions of leadership effectiveness.

Studies Designed To Look At Attitudes

A second group of studies clusters around attitudinal issues and stereotyping of male and female behavior. Of course, the classical study in this

area was conducted by Broverman et. al. on clinical judgements of mental health in which they found that while there were male and female scales on the personality tests, female descriptors were almost always negative images of valued traits: the female "passive" vs the male "aggressive" or the female "weak" vs the male "strong."[7]

In addition, this group of studies focuses on attitudinal issues as they influence women leader behaviors, and as they are reflected in the organizational settings in which women exercise leadership. For example, several studies found real differences between the way men and women were perceived in work groups and the kinds of behaviors that these differences engendered.[8] Garland and Price found significant differences in attitudes about the potential success of male and female managers.[9] In addition, sex role appropriate behavior was found to inhibit the assumption of leadership roles by women.[10] Finally, sex role stereotypical attitudes influence interactions between supervisors and subordinates in the work place. Both subordinate evaluations of female managers[11] and superordinate appraisals of their performance[12] are significantly affected by stereotypes of appropriate female and male behaviors that are held by evaluators.

On reflection, it would appear that research on these kinds of attitudinal problems provides data on important social psychological issues, inherent in perceptions of female leader behavior. On the other hand, its generalizability is limited, because it does not provide us with measures of leader effectiveness.

Issues Related To Organization Role and Equity

A third set of studies of women leaders has as its theme issues related

to organizational role and equity. In essence, these studies focus on the organizational context in which men and women exercise leadership. In addition, organizational barriers to women becoming effective leaders are delineated, and inequitable treatment of women leaders is examined.

For example, a number of studies have attempted to identify both organizational incentives and constraints to women achieving leadership positions. Radin[13] has discussed the special training needs of aspiring women leaders. Spizer has focused on the difference in opportunity that males and females have to enter into a mentor relationship as they attempt to move up in the organization's hierarchy.[14] Further, differences in administrative potential between men and women have been studied.[15]

In addition, research has focused on exclusionary practices for women leaders by organizations,[16] and on programs to promote equity and affirmative action within these institutional settings.[17] Finally, there has been a great deal of research on women in educational leadership positions --both in the public schools and in institutions of higher education.[18] Differential treatment, problems of belated inclusion and economic inequities have all been documented in these studies of women educational leaders.

The results of these studies are not surprising, and have serious consequences. In effect, this research breaks with the tradition of leadership studies that assume a male perspective, or research based on theory in which male values are so deeply embedded as to be invisible. That male-exclusive research has insured that only males, or women adopting male views, will be selected as leaders, will continue to lead and thereby set new courses, define new visions and create new worlds.

Studies Designed To Identify Leader Behavior

The most productive approach to the study of women leaders may be represented by the following set of studies that were designed to identify specific leader behaviors and skills. Interestingly, no significant differences between male and female leader behaviors were found in three major studies intended to develop a comprehensive view of effective leadership: Day and Stogdill studied male and female supervisors;[19] Denmark looked at differences in leadership styles of men and women;[20] and Schneier's contingent model of leadership revealed no significant differences between male and female leadership behaviors.[21] In addition, a number of studies have developed composite pictures of women leaders, in both traditional and nontraditional organizations.[22]

Research that focused on specific leader behaviors was inconclusive in terms of identifying sex differences. Muldrew and Balton identified differences in perceptions of decision accuracy in male and female leaders.[23] Also, male-female differences have been identified in the exercise of power and authority.[24] Alternatively, Szilagyi found little difference between reward behaviors of male and female leaders,[25] and Van Wagner & Swanson found no significant difference between the power styles of male and female leaders.[26]

In fact, the research on gender differences in specific leader behaviors is contradictory. For example, one thrust has been to delineate possible sex differences in the use of human-oriented (HO) and task-oriented (TO) leader behaviors. Several studies reported that women were slightly higher on <u>both</u> HO and TO than men.[27] On the other hand, Roussell found that women school administrators were rated higher on the TO variable and lower

on the HO variable than men.[28] Finally, Lee and Alvares found that male and female subordinates rated high task-oriented, high human-oriented supervisory skills differently, depending upon the sex of the leader.[29]

Clearly, the results are not all in on this HO/TO balance for effective leader behavior. One reason why the HO/TO discrepancy has not been resolved is that it is being studied in isolation. Instead, we need to identify a configuration of behaviors that potentially influence leader effectiveness. In so doing, we need to devote our attention to a further delineation of each behavior independently, as well as to a systematic study of the interactions between and among those behaviors. Most likely, leadership effectiveness will be defined by finding the appropriate set of behaviors and understanding their inter-relationships.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, the direction and scope of the research on women leaders conducted in the recent past addresses issues peripheral to the concept of leadership effectiveness. What emerges, however, is that attention to identifying gender differences in the exercise of specific leader behaviors will contribute to expanding the present set of behaviors that have been identified as contributing to leadership effectiveness.

Research on School Union Leaders

For the remainder of this presentation, I will review some of the more interesting findings of our research on school union leaders. The University of Maryland research team conducted two companion studies of male and female school union leaders: one study used a sample of past and present local union presidents selected randomly from all of the local school systems in the state;

the second study focused on individuals who held state level union leader positions. One difficulty with studying the leadership behavior of women has been that women leaders have historically been in voluntary organizations. Because school unions are voluntary organizations, we were able to find a critical mass of women leaders that enabled us to conduct the research.

A Configuration of Leader Behaviors

Our research assumed that the configuration of leader behaviors that constitute leadership effectiveness had not yet been determined, and that gender-inclusive studies designed to identify the potentially unique ways in which women exercise leadership would move us closer to meeting that goal. To that end, a matrix of leader behaviors and skills that previous research had indicated contributed to leadership effectiveness was developed. These behaviors included: (1) Maintenance vs improvement behaviors; (2) communications skills; (3) political skills; (4) human-oriented vs task-oriented behaviors, and (5) the exercise of power and influence.

Each behavior was first investigated independently, and then relationships and interactions between and among variables were identified. Because we believed that the next iteration of research on women leaders needed to obtain further clarification of gender differences in the exercise of these leader behaviors, particular attention was paid to identifying possible male and female differences. Polly Clark will discuss this configuration of leader behaviors in her paper which follows.

In addition, respondents identified clusters of technical skills that they believed union leaders must have in order to be effective. In essence, these skills can be clustered into four functional areas: first, organization of the

work, which includes staff management, pacing and delegation of tasks; second, working with individuals and groups including recruiting workers, consensus building and communication skills; third, administrative skills which include analyzing, budgeting, planning and problem-solving; and fourth, political skills including lobbying, campaigning, negotiating and networking. Table 1 below contains a list of these technical skills.

Table 1

Technical Skills Required To Be An Effective Union Leader

ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

- management
- pacing the work
- delegation of tasks
- staff supervision

HUMAN SKILLS

- recruit and motivate workers
- consensus building
- ability to inspire confidence
- communication skills

ADMINISTRATIVE SKILLS

- analytical skills
- planning
- problem solving
- budgeting skills

POLITICAL SKILLS

- lobbying and relating to legislature
- campaign skills
- negotiation and grievance techniques
- networking (internal and external)

It should be noted that there were no significant differences between men and women in their ratings of the importance of these functional skill areas. Also, both men and women reported that they learned these skills primarily on-the-job (80%), through NEA and MSTA workshops (74%) and through their own individual initiative (53%). In addition, the selection of some skills --such as recruiting workers and campaigning-- reflect the voluntary nature of these elective roles. As one former state president indicated: "Leaders need the feeling of control over members, but control is not there... you really have no means of reprimanding staff or volunteers, except maybe by removal from committees...that can be a drastic and devastating activity."

Motives and Incentives For Being Union Leaders

Being a school union leader requires a great deal of time; indeed, subjects reported that the position allowed them very little time for their personal and home lives. We collected data about the motives they had for getting involved in union work, and the incentives they saw for pursuing increasingly more important leadership roles in the union. The two most common reasons given by both men and women for their major investment of time and energy were: first, they believed that they were working for teachers and students, and that being an advocate is important work (90%); and second, they enjoyed the work (87%). That is, union work gave them opportunities to have both professional and social interactions and relationships with other union activists that they did not have when they were confined to the classroom.

Table 2 contains a rank order listing of other incentives and motives that subjects reported for obtaining and remaining in the union leader job.

Table 2

Motives And Incentives For Being A Union Leader

- I see my own personal growth.
- It's an opportunity to work with adults.
- I like the political milieu.
- I like to help others.
- It allows me to be effective beyond the classroom.
- You get recognition from peers.

The motives and incentives listed in Table 2 were reported between 62% and 80% of the time by both male and female respondents. They seemed to emerge from what individuals viewed as two deficiencies in the role of school teacher: a lack of opportunity to interact with adults and to increase their personal impact by improving the system. In addition, both men and women valued the opportunities for personal growth and increased respect from their peers that they viewed as inherent in the union leader role.

Some motives for moving into school union leadership positions were articulated only by women. For example, 62% of the women (and none of the men) found union leadership attractive because it allowed them to remain in teaching. Indeed, women tended to stress the importance of teaching to their personal sense of self-worth. By extension, becoming an active union leader was a "cause," whose major purpose was to improve the practice of education by making teachers'

lives better. Male respondents, on the other hand, did not seem to require as much reinforcement for their professional identity of teacher, and never cited "remaining in teaching" as an incentive for continuing to be active in the union. This phenomenon may be partially explained by Gurr's concept of relative deprivation[30] that was just discussed by Dr. Haas. In effect, women union leaders reported that they became a union leader in order to both be in the company of adults and to do important things, while at the same time maintaining their satisficing professional role as teacher.

School Administration

One of our hypotheses when we began this research was that women teachers may choose union leadership roles, because they had been unable to become administrators in their own school systems. Unions would provide them with an opportunity to exercise leadership in an alternative setting. However, we found that although most of the respondents had specific reasons for not becoming school administrators, exclusion from school administrative career paths was not mentioned.

50% of the females and 57% of the males in the sample indicated that they had at one time considered becoming a school administrator; the reason most often given (53% of the time) was that becoming an administrator might possibly provide them with "an opportunity to improve things." However, once they became active in union work, they by and large (83%) became disinterested in pursuing administrative careers. Changes in interest were attributed, equally by men and women to a growing awareness, as a consequence of their union activity, that the "principal's job is not very attractive" and to a disenchantment with the ethics, behaviors and values of administrator role incumbents.

Further insight may be gained from the responses of individuals who had not considered administration as a career. Men offered two explanations: first, they "saw too many headaches involved at the building level...and the building principal held a thankless job" (42%); and second, they did not wish to give up their elected roles, which they felt were very satisfying (53%). Alternatively, 87% of the women who reported that they had not considered school administration as a career option indicated that they "wanted to stay close to the classroom...and continue to work with children." Indeed, women respondents expressed considerably more pride in their roles as teachers than did their male counterparts. In sum, there were clear gender differences in the reasons expressed for not becoming school administrators. However, men and women were unanimous in expressing a general lack of interest in pursuing a school administration career path.

Summary

In the time alloted to me today, I was able to share with you a few of the more interesting themes that have emerged from our study of school union leaders. They included an examination of the hypothesis that union leader positions served as an alternative to individuals who did not have access to school administrative positions, and a review of some of the motives that men and women had for becoming union leaders, as well as the incentives that they had for continuing to seek more important leader positions in the union hierarchy. Finally, a matrix of leader behaviors was presented that contribute, according to the literature, to leadership effectiveness, and an interest was expressed in determining whether gender differences in the exercise of those behaviors were discernable. Polly Clark will now discuss that configuration of leader behaviors in greater detail.

Footnotes

[1] For a more detailed explanation of this framework, see B. A. Intriligator, Leadership theory revisited. Journal of Educational Equity and Leadership, March 1983.

[2] See for example: (1) S. Golub & E. Canty. Sex role expectations and the assumption of leadership by college women. Journal of Social Psychology, 1982, 116, 83-90; (2) M. Hennig & A. Jardim. The managerial woman. Garden City, NJ: Anchor Press, 1977; and (3) V. Schein. Relationships between sex role stereotypes and requisite management characteristics among female managers. Journal of Applied Psychology, 1975, 60, 340-349.

[3] See for example: (1) S. Inderlied & G. Powell. Sex role identity and leadership style: Different labels for the same concept? Sex Roles, 1979, 5(5), 613-625; (2) M. Jacobson, J.W. Antonelle & D. Opel. Women as authority figures: The use and nonuse of authority. Sex Roles, 1977, 3, 365-370; and (3) M. Lips. Women, men and the psychology of power. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1981.

[4] See for example: (1) S. Motowidlo. Sex role orientation and behavior in a work setting. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1982, 42, 935-945; and (2) B. Spillman et. al. Leadership emergence: Dynamic analysis of the effects of sex and androgeny. Small Group Behavior, 1981, 12, 139-157.

[5] See: (1) K. Bussey & B. Maughn. Gender differences in moral reasoning. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1982, 42, 701-706; and (2) C. Gilligan. In a different voice: Women's conceptions of self and morality. Harvard Education Review, 1977, 47, 481-517.

[6] See: (1) M. Jacobson, J.W. Antonelle & D. Opel. Women as authority figures: The use and non-use of authority. Sex Roles, 1977, 3, 365-370; (2) E. Nickles with L. Ashcraft. The coming matriarchy. New York: Seaview Books, 1981; and (3) P.R. Sanday. Female power and male dominance: On the origins of sexual inequality. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

[7] I.K. Broverman, D.M. Broverman, F.E. Clarkson, P.S. Rosenkrantz & S.R. Vogel. Sex stereotypes and clinical judgements of mental health. Journal of Social Issues, 1972, 28, 59-67.

[8] See for example: (1) C. Mamola. Women in mixed groups: Some research findings. Small Group Behavior, 1979, 10, 431-440; (2) E. Megaree. Influence of sex roles on the manifestation of leadership. Journal of Applied Psychology, 1969, 53, 377-382; (3) M. Okanes & W. Murray. Achievement and machievellianism among men and women managers. Psychological Reports, 1980, 46, 703-788; and

(4) C. Rousell. Relationships between sex role stereotypes and requisite management characteristics among female managers. Journal of Applied Psychology, 1975, 60, 340-349.

9 H. Garland & K. Price. Attitudes toward women in management and attributes for their success or failure in a management position. Journal of Applied Psychology, 1977, 62 29-33. See also: A. Kahn Reactions of profeminist and anti-feminist men to an expert women. Sex Roles, 1981, 7, 857-866.

10 See: S. Golub & E. Canty. Sex role expectations and the assumption of leadership by college women. Journal of Social Psychology, 1982, 116, 83-90; (2) C. Mamola. Women in mixed groups; Some research findings. Small Group Behavior, 1979, 10, 431-440; and (3) E. Megaree. Influence of sex roles on the manifestation of leadership. Journal of Applied Psychology, 1969, 53, 377-382.

11 See for example: (1) H.T. Ezell, C.A. Odewohn & J.D. Sherman. The effects of having been supervised by a woman on perceptions of female managerial competence. Personnel Psychology, 1981, 34(2), 291-300; (2) M.W. Petty & G. Lee. Moderating effects of sex on supervisor and subordinate on the relationship between supervisory behavior and subordinate satisfaction. Journal of Applied Psychology, 1975, 60, 624-628; and (3) K. Wexley & E. Pulakos. Sex effects on performance ratings in manager-subordinate dyads: A field study. Journal of Applied Psychology, 1981, 67, 433-439.

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14 J. Spizer. Role models, mentors and sponsors: The elusive concepts. Signs, 1981, 6, 692-712.

15 See for example: (1) J. Adkinson. Women in school administration; A Review of the research. Review of Educational Research, 1981, 51, 311-343; (2) E. Arons. Male and female administrative potential: Is there a difference? NASSP Bulletin, 1980, 64, 5-8.

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See for example: (1) J. Berman. The management behavior of female high school principals. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York City, March 1982; (2) S.K. Biklen & M.B. Brannigan. Women and educational leadership. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1981; (3) F. Ortiz & J. Covel. Women in school administration: A case analysis. Urban Education, 1978, 13(2), 213-235; and (4) P.A. Achmuck, W.W. Charters Jr. & R.O. Carlson. Educational policy and management: Sex differentials. New York: Academic Press, 1981.

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29 D. Lee & K. Alvares. Effects of sex on descriptions and evaluations of supervisory behavior in a simulated industrial setting. Journal of Applied Psychology, 1977, 62, 405-410.

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